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Kadafi justifies attacks

Libyan leader calls struggle holy

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TRIPOLI, Libya — Libya's leader, Col. Muammar el Kadafi, said yesterday that last weekend's deadly airport attacks in Rome and Vienna were justified because they were part of the holy struggle of a wronged Palestinian people.

He warned that any Israeli reprisal against Palestinians would be avenged and that an attack on Libya would cause a new Middle East war.

"We have civilian Palestinians here. . . . They are experts, teachers, students," Colonel Kadafi told a small group of Western reporters at a meeting in his headquarters complex. "If they are followed and harassed, then we have the right to follow and harass American citizens in their own streets and we have the right to follow Jews in the occupied Palestine."

Colonel Kadafi said any "aggression" against Libya would mark the "beginning of the end."

"There will be no peace in the Mediterranean, no American airlines, no trade, military or non-military. . . . It will turn over the table both within the Mediterranean zone and in the Middle East, perhaps in

the whole world."

In Washington, the State Department had no immediate comment.

Colonel Kadafi said Libya supported the Palestinian guerrilla struggle but was not responsible for "tactical decisions" on making attacks. When Colonel Kadafi was asked about the radical Palestinian leader Abu Nidal, described by Israel and the United States as the mastermind of the latest attacks, he dismissed the questions as irrelevant.

"You should understand that there are millions of Abu Nidals among the Palestinian people," he said. "If tomorrow Abu Nidal is dead, then another Abu Nidal will emerge."

Abu Nidal, whose real name is Sabry al-Banna, is believed by Israeli and U.S. analysts to have been responsible for more terrorist attacks than any other Palestinian leader since his break from the PLO's mainstream leader, Yasser Arafat, in 1974. His whereabouts and operations are heavily shielded, but both the United States and Israel believe he has Colonel Kadafi's support.

Colonel Kadafi said that Israel would have no justification for seeking revenge in airport attacks Friday, in which 18 people died, because the assaults were themselves retaliation for Israel's Oct. 1 air raid on the PLO's headquarters in Tunis, Tunisia. More than 60 Palestinians and Tunisians died in that raid.

Israel has often killed innocents since the 1948 creation of the Jewish state, Colonel Kadafi said. He added that such a reprisal would be welcomed and would set off a "furious" round of what he called "tit-for-tat" attacks.

"This is what is requested by the Palestinians, because the Israelis cannot keep up with this race," he said. "This action will be increased and intensified until recognition is achieved of the Palestinian people on their homeland."

The 50-minute meeting with reporters was held in a conference center in the Libyan leader's Bab Al Azzizya headquarters. Soviet-made tanks in cement bunkers guard the entrances and soldiers in red berets closely watch all visitors.

Colonel Kadafi was dressed casually in a red shirt and matching gray vest and pants, and he appeared relaxed, laughing heartily at several of his own jokes.

Before he left, he invited his guests to tour the large complex, which includes modern meeting halls and guest houses as well as simple tents sometimes used for state occasions. He said the guests should see for themselves that it had been wrongly described as a "terrorist and military target."

His own safety was not a concern, he said, even though the Reagan administration is reported to have approved a CIA plan to subvert his regime and was reported to have received assessments of two potential targets in Libya for consideration in possible U.S. reaction to the airport attacks.

"I have passed the stage of being frightened," he said. "I work for the liberation and unity of my homeland. This is my duty and is a legitimate action."

"I have not gone to occupy America," he said. "I have not gone to occupy Europe. They themselves threaten us and the back yard of our home."

Asked about recent comments by President Reagan and Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres describing him, among other things, as an "ego-maniac," Colonel Kadafi said that the "most ugly phenomenon on earth" was "the presence of an actor who is ruling a great power."

"There is no craziness, imperialism, irresponsibility and irrationality in this world like Reagan," he said.